

## **Migration and Coexistence: A History of Tiv-Kuteb Relations in Takum Area of Taraba State Nigeria, 1900-2015**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** The relationship between the Tiv and Kuteb people is multidimensional and multifaceted. It has been marked by both cooperation and conflict.

**Objective:** Although the area of conflict has been the emphasis of most studies, this article examined the migration of the Tiv into Takum area and the history of socio-cultural and economic relations with the Kuteb.

**Method:** The paper makes use of both primary and secondary sources of history for data collection. Information accessed was subjected to scrutiny.

**Result:** The paper argued that the two groups overtime have demonstrated positive outcomes which enriched the nature of the interaction between them, leading to cultural exchange, cooperation in farming, and the integration of culinary traditions.

**Conclusion:** This study concludes that similarities exist especially around socio-cultural and economic relations between the Kuteb and Tiv, and thereby recommends that these areas of similarities and interactions should be encouraged to further strengthen harmonious co-existence.

**Keywords:** Kuteb, Tiv, Migration, Co-existence, Intergroup Relations, Takum Area

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Tiv and Kuteb people of Nigeria share a long and complex history, marked by both cooperation and conflict. For decades, these two groups have interacted with each other, their paths intertwined by migration, trade, and cultural exchange. Their relationship has been shaped by a shared past, and a deep understanding of the land they both call home. In the early 20th century, the Tiv people migrated into Kuteb land (Takum Area) and there became a convergence of the two ethnic groups. This increased interaction brought about both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, it fostered trade, cultural exchange, and intermarriage. On the other hand, it also led to competition for land and resources, sometimes resulting in conflict. This article explores the history of the Tiv and Kuteb people, focusing on their interactions and the factors that have contributed to their enduring relationship. It is imperative to note that the subject of intergroup relations has featured vigorously in Nigerian historiography. Be that as it may, there exist dearth of literature on the subject matter of inter-group relations between the Kuteb and Tiv. The few available studies often emphasize on the conflict relations among the groups, thus, the need for this study to fill these perceived academic lacunae.

## **METHOD**

The historical method of research was adopted for this study. Extensive field work was carried out by the researchers to gather data and other valuable information that formed the basis of this research. The researchers conducted oral interviews in Kuteb and Tiv settlements within Takum area. These oral interviews were unstructured. The researchers not only conducted these oral interviews but also verified all of the claims by subjecting them to critical thinking and historical analysis. More so, the researchers consulted some written sources such as books, articles in journal and unpublished undergraduate project.

### **Tiv Migration into Takum Area**

The history of the Tiv to Takum area is germane for the understanding of their relations with the Kuteb people. Most Tiv origin traditions agree that the Tiv and the Bantu of Central and South Africa are descent from the same people. This claim is based on linguistic criteria, as the Tiv and Bantu vocabulary share striking similarities. Existing stereotype myths and ancestral tales about the Tiv back up linguistic findings. The point of dispersal, on the other hand, remains unresolved in the Tiv-Bantu link. Some traditions point to South Africa, while others point to Central Africa, especially the Congo Basin (Gbor, 1974).

Swem has been identified as the initial home or dispersal place of the Tiv people in recent research, particularly by Tiv scholars. More ethnographic, archaeological, and linguistic investigations of the Swem phenomena, rather than extending too far to South Africa, are thought to provide more relevant insights (Akombo, 2016). Lathan even asserted that the Bantu people's ancestral homeland is located south of Lake Chad in the Republic of Cameroon (Lathan, 1972). This could indicate that the Tiv wave was one of the Bantu waves that migrated to other parts of Africa from their original Bantu homeland in the Lake Chad area. This reasoning supports the theory that Tiv expansion began in the Swem hills. Further research has revealed that Swem was the source of the Tiv's massive spread. Some researchers link this occurrence to a conflict with the Bafum, who lived in the kingdom of Kon in Cameroon's Bamenda Province. Others ascribe the movement to an increase in Tiv population that Swem was unable to contain or sustain, resulting in the phenomena of land hunger (Akombo, 2016).

The never-ending argument over Swem's location proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that Swem is a phenomenon that exists outside of Nigeria, specifically between the Nigerian and Cameroon highlands, as Makar claims. Others believe that the Tiv temporarily settled on a number of hills before arriving at the last cluster of hills, known as the Nwange hills, after leaving Swem. The Tiv came into interaction with certain hostile Atoatyev groups in the Nwange hills, including the Ugee, Utange, Uchiv, Ukwese, Ulive, Ugbe, and Iyon. The Tiv were forced to flee the Nwange highlands due to enmity from these Atoatyev, particularly from the Utange and Ugee. This movement is reported to have begun about the turn of the nineteenth century. This marked the beginning of Tiv migration into the Nigerian area (Akombo, 2016).

The formation of clannish arrangements among the Tiv was a significant development at the Nwange hills before migration into Nigeria began. The idea of clans was vividly defined on these hills. As a result, movements, especially in Nigeria, were organized on a clannish basis. Whether this is disputed or not, what is known is that the people were aware of their clannish structure prior

to their last migration into their current home (Nwafor, & Ogbodo, 2015). Some Tiv clans, such as Shitire, Ugondo, and Ukum, even migrated into the Wukari Federation during colonial times in this manner (Akombo, 2016). While the Shitire and Ugondo relocated to Takum, the majority of the Shitire and Ugondo remained. As a result, we can safely conclude that the Shitire and Ugondo clans make up the bulk of the Tiv in Takum. However, we have other Tiv clans which are domiciled in Takum Local Government and diverse reasons exist for their migration in to Takum to settle among the Kuteb people.

For instance, while having an oral interview with Elder Samuel Gbaaondo, he opined that they are known as the *Shiakpe* clan of the Tiv people who came to establish their settlement at the place known today as Gbaaondo which borders the Rubur clan of the Kuteb people (Samuel, 2020). He stated that they migrated from the Katsina-Ala area because of chieftaincy dispute and dissatisfaction by their great grandfather known as Mngumi. Mngumi felt aggrieved because he wanted chieftaincy title, but he was denied despite fulfilling all the requirements that were needed. As such, he decided to move out of the Katsina-Ala area into Gbaaondo. While moving, he had few followers who moved with him and they came to settle in Kuteb land, seeking permission from the Rubur people to give them land where they could settle. The land which was given to Mngumi was where he founded the Gbaaondo settlement around the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. After settling at Gbaaondo, Mngumi went to Wukari to meet the colonial officers there to make him a chief over his people which was granted to him, but he was to be answerable to the Ukwé in Takum (Samuel, 2020).

### **Socio-Cultural and Economic Linkages**

The Kuteb and Tiv people have enjoyed a high degree of socio-economic and cultural relations as shall be discussed. Economically, both the Tiv and Kuteb peoples are farmers, but they specialize in the cultivation of different crops. Some of the principal crops which the Kuteb people engage in its large-scale farming are guinea corn, maize and groundnut while on the other hand, the Tiv people engage in the large scale cultivation of yam, soya beans and pepper (Zaki, 2020). Because we have earlier established that no human society is self-sufficient or can live in autarky (Aligwe, & Nwafor, 2016), the Kuteb and Tiv people engage in the exchange of their farm products to complement each other (Luka, 2017). Even when market centres were established in Tiv and Kuteb villages and the introduction of currency as the official and legal means of exchange, the Tiv and Kuteb people take their farm products to these markets so that they can sell and increase their wealth, also satisfying each other's needs.

It is expedient to further explain that both the Kuteb and Tiv people have been able to influence each other's choice of crop for farming. It has been stated earlier that the Kuteb people are more focused in the large scale farming of crops such as guinea, maize and groundnut while the Tiv people specialize in the farming of yam, soya beans and pepper as such, their daily interaction has influenced them to also engage in the farming of those crops which was hitherto not accustomed to them (Isaac, 2020). For instance, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Kuteb people especially those from the Rubur clan of the Kuteb people have taken to farming yam in large scale. Similarly, the Tiv people have also learnt the art of farming guinea corn, maize, and groundnut at a large scale too because of their inter-relationship with the Kuteb people. Although the two groups have influenced each other's cultivation of their principal crops, but emphasis must be laid that both the Kuteb and Tiv people retain their mastery of cultivation for

their principal crops. Put differently, the Tiv people are still professionals and more skilled than the Kuteb people when it comes to the cultivation of yam, similarly the Kuteb people are more skilled and professional to the Tiv people when it comes to farming guinea corn, groundnut, and maize (Markus, 2021).

Locally brewed alcohol or beer, known in Kuteb language as *jwab*, has served as a foundation of Kuteb-Tiv friendship since the early twentieth century, when the two peoples first met. The Kuteb ladies were professionals in brewing of *jwab* (Agbe, 2006). When Tiv farmers finished their farm work, they went straight to Kuteb women's *jwab* joints or residences. By the 1960s, the brewing sector had received a significant boost from thirsty Tiv farmers, and it had become lucrative. It should be highlighted at this point that the brewing sector was patronized not only by Tiv farmers, but also by the Kuteb people themselves and other groups in the Takum area. As soon as the Tiv arrived at these local breweries, they were hailed by their Kuteb counterparts, who greeted them with the joking pejorative moniker *mitsi*. After that, the two would sit down to drink and form a lasting friendship. Despite the occasional misunderstandings stemming from land conflicts, this Tiv-Kuteb connection has survived into the twenty-first century. The Kuteb-Tiv drinking companions have evolved over time, from native beer (*jwab*) to sophisticated modern beer parlours (Agbe, 2006). The Tiv and Kuteb operate an exchange programme whereby Kuteb come to Tiv markets such as Gbaaondo, Gbese, Dogon-gawa, Tor-Donga among others to drink while the Tiv also patronize Kuteb markets such as Kwari, Jenuwa Gida, Kpambo, Fikyu etcetera.

There also seems to be a link between the Kuteb and Tiv people in the aspect of their culture. One aspect of culture is the consumption pattern of a people through the kind of diet or food they eat. Cultural beliefs and traditions influence the consumption and the preparation of certain foods in different cultures. Culture and tradition influence food consumption patterns. Food habits are one of the most complex aspects of human behaviour, being determined by multiple motives and directed and controlled by multiple stimuli. Food acceptance is a complex reaction influenced by psychological, social, and cultural factors. The likes and dislikes of the individual with respect to food could move in a framework of race, tradition, and culture. For most people food is cultural. A plant or animal may be considered edible in one society and inedible in another (Cassel, 1957).

It is in the light of the above that we could see that the Kuteb and Tiv people respectively were not accustomed to the consumption of some certain food or diet until their contact with each other. For instance, it was a taboo in the Kuteb society for anyone to eat monitor lizard (Kuki) because of a myth attached to monitor lizard (Kuki). It was said that one time in the olden days, a family went to the farm to do some work. While in the farm, they kept their little son under a tree in the farm. Being alone, the baby started crying and despite the effort of the mother to pet the baby to stop crying became an exercise in futility, as a result, his parents and elderly ones ignored him continuing their work. After a while, the baby kept quiet. After working for some hours, the mother came to check the baby and discovered that Kuki (monitor lizard) was playing with the child. For this reason, it was declared a taboo for the people to eat Kuki (Yaweh, 2017). But with the coming of the Tiv people in to Kuteb land, they have greatly influenced the Kuteb people to the consumption of monitor lizard as a very tasty meat. Again, the consumption of frog is alien to the Kuteb people prior to their contact with the Tiv people but a good number of Kuteb people especially those that are neighbours to the Tiv people now consume frog. Similarly, the Tiv people were not accustomed to the consumption of cooked corn/guinea corn flour meal also known as

*iraenin* Kuteb language. Their cordiality with the Kuteb people is what has endeared them to consume such meal. Furthermore, the Tiv people generally forbids the consumption of dog meat because they see it as an animal that is closely related to human and also trained to secure the compound, but in contemporary times, available evidence indicates that their interaction with the Kuteb people has influence some of them to jettison such belief. There are some Tiv men and women who visit Kuteb markets to partake in the consumption of dog meat which has a nick name by its eaters 404.

Kuteb traditional soups such as *itongnasara* (moringa leave soup), *itongtsiyae*(pumpkin leave soup), *itongbishi*(creeping jenny leave soup), *itongikip* (sesame leave soup) and among others are today also consumed by the Tiv people most especially those who are neighbours to the Kuteb. It is not clear as to who among the Kuteb or Tiv people influenced the other in the consumption of rat, but then the two groups love hunting for rat especially through bush burning or setting of traps. In fact, some Kuteb and Tiv youths usually go for rat hunting together and the proceeds from the hunting expedition is shared by those who partook in the exercise (Samuel, 2020).

Another point of interaction between the Kuteb and Tiv people is in the area of group farming. This type of farming is called *uku* in Kuteb language and *kuku* in Tiv language. Group farming is a system of collective agricultural practice by association of people with similar interest. This system of farm work is often engaged by youths of both Kuteb and Tiv extracts. One important thing to note about this system is that since it is done in group by people with like minds, one does not become lazy or bored during farm work. This is because while farm work is ongoing, peers who are involved cracked jokes and make fun of themselves. The number of people in this farming system is usually from 5 and above. If Mr. A's farm is visited today, the following day goes to Mr. B until everyone's farm is visited. Hence the Kuteb and Tiv people are neighbours, and they live close to each other, they have always utilized this system of group farming for high productivity. Pertinent to state that, this system of farming was effectively used by the two groups during the farmers-herders conflicts in Takum. This is because it became the tradition of some unscrupulous Fulani herder to attack farmers in their farm especially if the farmer was alone. But in the case whereby the people are in group, it becomes difficult for the Fulani bad eggs to launch such an attack because they can easily be repelled (Kuni, 2021).

Linguistically, the Kuteb and Tiv people have some similarities in certain words' phonology and meaning. It is not certain as to which of the group influenced the other, but it could seem that these words which shall be listed below are not just coincidental but the result of interaction.

<b>Kuteb</b>	<b>Tiv</b>	<b>English</b>
Nyi	Anyi	Teeth
Igo	Igo	Pig
Sokchi	Iyochi	Hospital
Uku	Kuku	Group farming
Kuki	Kuki	Monitor lizard
Mbatiyib	Ormbaiv	Thief
Ndemun	Ndevee	Good morning



It is worthy to note that, a significant number of Kuteb people especially those from the Rubur clan speak Tiv language fluently and also those Tiv people who are neighbours to the Kuteb speak the Kuteb language fluently. This is as a result of their closeness and interaction which has further strengthened unity among the groups to an extent.

Intermarriage is another factor in the Kuteb-Tiv relations. As have been stated earlier in this study, intermarriage serves as a form of ethnic integration and assimilation. Thus, there exist to an extent ethnic integration and assimilation between the Kuteb people and Tiv people as a result of intermarriage. For instance, Kuteb women who are married to Tiv men introduced the consumption of some Kuteb delicacies to their husbands and his family, some of these delicacies have been outlined above. Same also, Tiv women who are married to Kuteb men also introduced their native delicacies to their husband. One of the reasons why people marry is for procreation, in this case, children who are products of intermarriage between the Kuteb and Tiv are exposed to two different cultures. They get to learn etiquettes, morals, language, tradition and beliefs from the two cultures which further strengthen their bond for the two cultures (Zaki, 2020).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that despite the increasing ethnic tension and suspicion among groups in Nigeria which has continued to affect the process of nation building, the Tiv and Kuteb people have maintained a relationship of co-operation and mutual respect. This is due in part to the fact that the two groups share several cultural similarities. For example, both groups speak languages that belong to the Niger-Congo language family. Additionally, both groups have a strong tradition of oral history and storytelling. The economic interaction of the two groups have created bond of friendship which must be sustained for continued sustenance of peace which is a key driver of development.

## **Ethical Clearance**

Ethical consent was obtained from all interviewees involved in this study. They were informed that the research was solely for academic purposes and that their opinion was entirely voluntary.

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## **Conflict of Interest**

There is no conflict of interest.

## **Author's Contribution**

The idea for this study was conceived by Yaweh Filibus. Abdullahi Ibrahim drafted the methodology for the study. James Sunday Onyebuchi and Yaweh Filibus conducted the oral interviews and wrote the initial manuscript. All the authors read and approved the final manuscript for publication in its current form.

## **Availability of data and materials.**

The data on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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